

ACTION ALERT: 2025-27 State Budget

4-07-25

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During the month of April, the state legislature's Joint Finance Committee (JFC), the committee responsible for development of the state budget, is holding four public hearings around the state to hear what priorities Wisconsinites have for the 2025-27 State Budget. The first two budget hearings were held in Kaukauna (4/02/25) and West Allis (4/04/25). The schedule for the remaining two public budget hearings is:

- April 28 - Hayward High School, Hayward, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
- April 29 – Northcentral Technical College, Wausau, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

See the hearing announcement - <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/raw/cid/1909520> for more detail. **(Note: to open active links throughout this document – in blue font - right click on the word or link and choose 'open hyperlink' or press the control (ctrl) key and hit left click on the word or link.)**

Some aging/aging and disability resource center (ADRC) network professionals (and hopefully board/advisory council members, older adults, people living with disabilities, and family caregivers too) are making plans to attend one of the in-person budget hearings. **Thank you**, this is important. This is a great way to make sure the issues of importance to older adults are shared with members of the legislature's JFC members, as well as other state and local officials, community members, and members of the media in attendance at the hearings! See [Tips for Testifying Before JFC at State Budget Hearings](#). Written testimony regarding your priorities for the state budget can also be shared with JFC members via an online portal at: <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomment>, by email at budget.comments@legis.wisconsin.gov or sent via U.S. mail to: Joe Malkasian, Room 305 East, State Capitol, Madison, WI 53702.

Issue briefs on WAAN's budget priorities are available at: <https://gwaar.org/api/cms/viewFile/id/2008488>.

With so much at stake for older adults, people living with disabilities, and caregivers in this budget, we must use every opportunity available to provide input on the 2025-27 state budget. To further lift up the state's aging network budget priorities, the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) created a **four-week state budget campaign**. **It is critically important for state legislators to hear from their constituents. Your stories and concerns are impactful!**

WAAN's state budget campaign includes strategies for connecting with members of the JFC, your own state Senator and Assembly Representative, as well as opportunities to educate the public and media about the WAAN issues. **Each week of the campaign will focus on a different theme.** Everyone helping to emphasize the same issues in a given week, will help raise the visibility of the issues. We are encouraging contact using all means of communication: emails, phones, texts, letters and in person discussions. **We need you to communicate on the weekly theme each week of the campaign, so our messages will be heard loud and clear. The aging networks' power is you!** Your voice is our most powerful tool to secure funding for programs and services for older adults and family caregivers.

Please participate as you are able and **share this action alert widely with board and advisory council members, program participants, volunteers, community partners, and older adults and family caregivers in your community and ask them to do the same.**

Put this four-week campaign on your calendar! **WAAN's weekly state budget campaign themes are as follows:**

- **April 7th – Meeting basic needs:** This week our focus is on funding for Transportation services, Meals on Wheels/Home-Delivered Meals, and Housing
- **April 14th – Support and protection:** This week will focus on funding for the Board on Aging and Long Term Care and Elder Abuse Prevention
- **April 21st – Health and independence:** This week will focus on funding for Healthy Aging Grants and the Long-Term Care Workforce
- **April 28th Knowledge is power:** This week our focus will be on funding for Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), the Elder Benefit Specialist Program, and the Wisconsin Guardianship Support Center

Week One (4/07 – 4/11/25) - Bullet/Talking Points for this week's "meeting basic needs" theme -

Transportation

- Despite a growing aging population, the annual s. 85.21 (specialized transportation assistance for counties) funding amount has not increased in the last five years.
- Program funding requests for grants for capital and operating projects (s. 85.22) that improve the mobility of seniors and individuals with disabilities continually exceed the available funding.
- Specialized transportation is critical for people who do not drive, provides economic growth, and improves overall quality of life.

Budget ask: 1.) Increase specialized transportation funding by 10% annually and incorporate annual inflationary increases, and 2.) Increase the capital and operation assistance program funding for specialized transportation by 20%.

For more information, see WAAN's [Transportation Issue Brief](#)

Meals on Wheels/Home-delivered meals (HDM)

- Home-delivered meal services provide nutritious food, safety checks, socialization, and connections to other needed services.
- For nearly 70% of the people served, the home-delivered meal was their main source of food and nutrition each day.
- One year of home-delivered meals and the services that accompany it roughly equate to the same cost of one day in the hospital or 10 days in the nursing home.
- High levels of participant need, loss of federal and COVID-19 funding, and increased expenses, are creating a growing waitlist for meals.

Core member organizations

Aging and Disability Professionals Association of Wisconsin (ADPAW) • Alzheimer's Association Wisconsin Chapter Board on Aging and Long Term Care (BOALTC) • Wisconsin Adult Day Services Association (WADSA) Wisconsin Association of Area Agencies on Aging (W4A) • Wisconsin Association of Benefit Specialists (WABS) Wisconsin Association of Nutrition Directors (WAND) • Wisconsin Association of Senior Centers (WASC) Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance (WFACSA) • Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA) Wisconsin Senior Advocates • Wisconsin Senior Corps Association (WISCA) • Wisconsin Tribal Aging Unit Association

Mission

The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) works with and for all older adults by educating community members and policy makers on priority issues while advocating for meaningful change. Learn more at <https://gwaar.org/waan>.

Budget ask: Increase state home-delivered meal service funding by \$12.6 million in each year of the budget to meet the need across the state.

For more information, see WAAN's [Meals on Wheels Issue Brief](#)

Housing

- Safe, affordable, accessible housing is essential to the overall health and wellbeing of individuals, neighborhoods, and communities
- It is increasingly difficult for older Wisconsinites to find safe, accessible, and affordable housing
- More than one-half of renters aged 65+ and nearly one-quarter of owner-occupied homes headed by a person 65+ spend more than 30% of their monthly income on housing costs

Budget ask: 1.) Expand low-income housing tax credits for developers, focused on older adult housing, 2.) Expand funding for the State Trust Fund Loan Program to help finance development of affordable housing, 3.) Increase the income limit and maximum annual loan limit within the Property Tax Deferral Loan Program, and 4.) Expand the Revolving Loan Program eligibility to include larger municipalities.

For more information, see WAAN's [Housing Issue Brief](#)

Actions needed this week:

Action Step 1 – Submit online comments related to any or all of the issues of the week (see talking points and issue brief links above. Include how these issues or services impact your life or the life of someone you care about) **to the Joint Finance Committee using their online portal:**

www.legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments (If you prefer, your comments may also be submitted to the Joint Finance Committee using the following email address: budget.comments@legis.wisconsin.gov)

Action Step 2 – Send emails to your own state elected officials. Send one email to your state Assembly Representative and another to your state Senator. To find out who your state legislators are, and to find their contact information, go to <https://maps.legis.wisconsin.gov/> and enter your home address at the top of the page. **Let your legislators know how these issues impact you personally or those you serve. Be sure you include your address, so they know you are a constituent or are serving constituents in their district.** Every member of the assembly and senate will eventually vote on the budget. In addition, they can bring your concerns to members of the JFC since they all have a “budget buddy” to make sure they each have a say in the budget.

Action Step 3 – Share this message with board/advisory council members, program participants, volunteers, and community members and partners and ask them to take action too! Don't forget to ask family and friends too!

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Optional Action Steps

Share your story (see [Five Steps for Creating Powerful Personal Testimony](#)). How do the programs or services in this week's theme or the absence of these services and programs affect your life or the life of a family member, friend, or someone you serve. **In addition to sharing your personal story in your written comments to JFC and your own state legislators, consider one or more of these additional actions:**

- A. Write a letter to the editor!** Using your story and/or talking points on this week's issues (see above) write a short letter to the editor to your local daily or weekly paper.
- B. Prepare articles for your agency newsletter related to these budget topics** (and/or submit an article to your local newspaper regarding this week's issues).
- C. Attend an in-district listening session with your legislator(s).** Many legislators are holding listening sessions in their districts. Sign up for your legislators' electronic newsletters and watch for opportunities for you to connect with them.
- D. Invite your legislators for a site visit or to attend an agency event or board meeting.** This is a great way to help your legislators hear about and see the great work you are doing.

Your voice matters! The more of us that participate in the hearings and the weekly campaign activities, the more legislators will hear about the issues important to aging advocates and older adults.

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